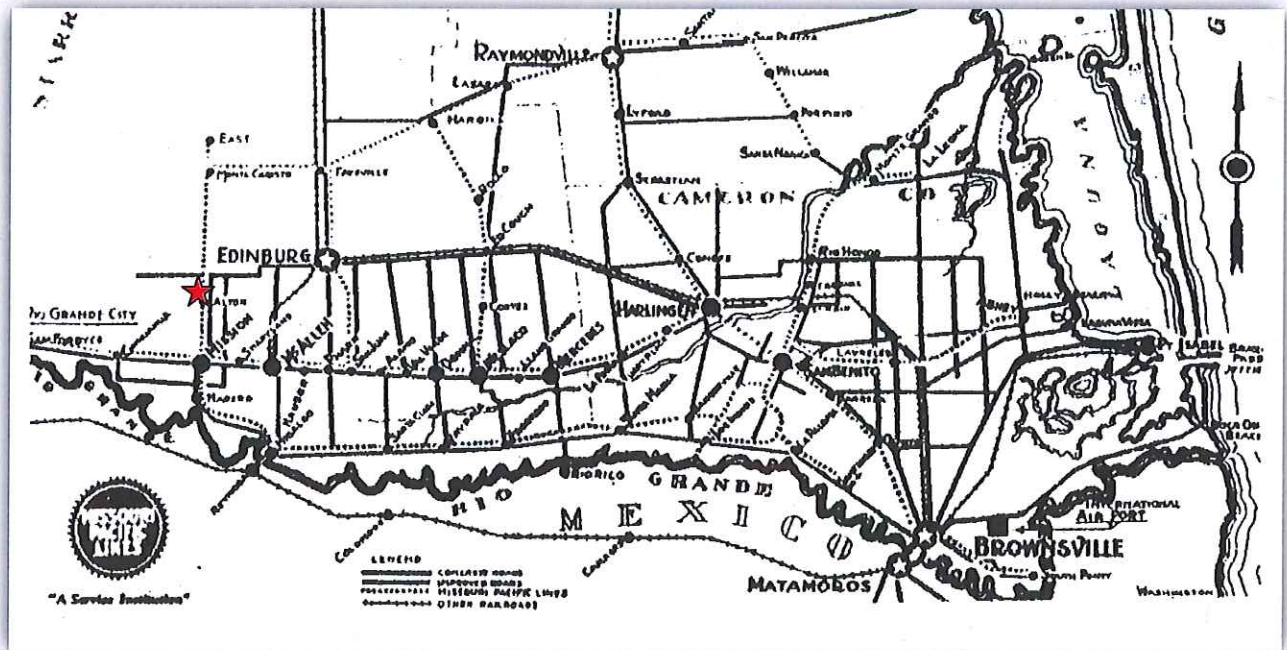


INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

HISTORY

Alton, Texas originated as a stop on the San Benito and Rio Grande Valley Railway, nicknamed "The Spiderweb Railroad". It was founded in 1911 by citizens and railroad officials of Alton, Illinois and the Alton Illinois Railroad. Alton is located just four miles north of the City of Mission on State Highway 107 in Hidalgo County.



"The Spiderweb Railroad"

Described as a network of feeder spurs which eventually grew to about 128 miles of track.

The Spiderweb Railroad was the brainchild of Sam A. Robertson, founder of nearby city, San Benito, Texas. Robertson, a brilliant civil engineer and a man of unusual foresight, had an excellent record for railroad building in the West. In the midst of 1907, he had acquired a total of 68,000 acres for development, platted the San Benito Townsite and had water flowing in from the main canal, originally a dry "resaca" (holding pond). In 1911, the San Benito and Rio Grande Valley Railway made junction with the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway. Shortly thereafter, more than a dozen other new towns, including Alton, were growing lustily along the railroad right of way from San Benito to Mission, Texas. For the locals, this period was essential in the Valley's early development into one of the country's leading fruit and vegetable producing era.

Markets in the East and Midwest part of the country were eager for fresh fruits, vegetables, fuel oil, machinery, and construction products that the Spiderweb Railroad could ship for them. The Rio Grande Valley was in abundance of fruits and vegetables, but Alton, better known for its sedimentary rock "caliche" pits, had the perfect product to ship for construction projects being built up north during this period. The Alton Railway from Alton, Illinois made its way to the Valley to be the main shipper for caliche. Workers from the Alton Railway decided to remain in this hardly known town and began settling. Even though Alton was located a little over 69 miles from the main railroad artery in San Benito, the fifty citizens that established themselves in Alton took advantage of making it one of the last stops for the Spiderweb Railroad. They took part in the excavating and shipping of the tons of sedimentary rock to northern states. Today, the caliche pits remain as a reminder of the influence they took in initiating our city.

Even though Alton was a very small town along the railroad, a post office was established from 1913 to 1916. Since then, Mission has served as the main post office. In recent years, a sub-post office has been maintained in Alton for postal services. In the late 1920's, a small six-grade school was in operation. Named after the town, Alton School was managed by the Hidalgo County School Superintendent. It was later consolidated with the Mission Consolidated Independent School District and is now Alton Elementary. Many of their alumni still reside in Alton.



John H. Shary in 1939

In 1912, businessman and developer John H. Shary became interested in the lower Rio Grande Valley's commercial potential of citrus-growing. Between 1912 and 1923, Shary purchased and subdivided more than 50,000 acres in Alton's neighbor city of Mission. Around 1915, he purchased an irrigation project from John Conway, the founder of Mission, and created the United Irrigation Company. The U.I.C. supplied water to more than 55,000 acres of land. The small population of Alton locals and migrants helped clear brush, dug canals and laid in roads and began developing citrus farms. As the town's need for water grew, Water District No. 7 was formed in the 1930's; it was later named United Water

District in 1990. Sharyland Water Supply is now Alton's water utility.

Alton's growth was hardly noted; however, its neighboring city of Mission was well known for John H. Shary's Orchards. After two more decades, the Spiderweb's Railroad decline was due to advances in road building and motor transportation. With the initiation of better highways and fluctuating traffic, the railroad incrementally abandoned the railroad tracks over time.

Serving the Valley well over many years, but time, progress, and the changing nature of agriculture made it obsolete and uneconomical. In 1969, the segment from Alton to Monte Cristo was abandoned. Practically the entire railroad has now been demolished.

In 1967, San Martin de Porres Catholic Church, originally a mission, was constructed. Due to the immense attendance and servicing of over 250 families for Alton and adjoining towns, a large hall and other improvements were added, declaring it a parish in 1969. San Martin de Porres Catholic Church now serves a general population of over 10,000 from Alton and its surrounding neighboring cities. There are over 20 places of worship that include Baptist, Pentecostal, Christian and Catholic Parishes in Alton, today.



San Martin de Porres Catholic Parish

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTON, TEXAS

With the population of about 2,400, the community voted to incorporate and formed a General Rule Charter on April 1, 1978. It's first Mayor, San Juanita Zamora, fought for incorporation to avoid any further developments of "colonias" having inappropriate water, sewer, streets and other problems that continued to emerge. Colonias are known as city neighborhoods or a rural settlement inhabited predominantly by Mexicans or Mexican Americans. Mayor Zamora wanted development to be controlled by enforced rules, and Federal funds were available to a small corporation. With the city's



Alton City Hall - 2006

first four aldermen, their first meetings were held in a small room leased from a local merchant. Within a few months, a church right down the street offered to sell their building for a fair price. The City Hall housed the court, police station, a two-cell jail and the public works department. A volunteer Fire Station and community center were among the public buildings that were subsequently built the same year.

With continued efforts and dedication, the city's administration was approved for a Farmers Home Administrations loan which was to be utilized for housing, water systems, emergency relief and rural development. Consequently, in 1981, HUD approved a similar grant to be used for drainage system, water lines, meters, acquire land for low-rent housing; installing gas lines, commence a housing rehabilitation program and for commercial and industrial development.



The city's population was slowly developing and was not recognized for almost a decade. Long gone were the days known for its caliche pits. That recognition was acknowledged again on September 21, 1989. At about 7:30 a.m., a Dr. Pepper truck collided with a Mission CISD school bus, knocking it into a caliche pit filled with water at the cross corner of Five Mile Road and Bryan Road. The small community was devastated for a total of 21 children drowned and 60 were injured. The news of such tragedy had the town, the county, and even the nation, mourning for these children. A few years later, Alton received a grant from the Texas Park and Wildlife Commission to aid with

the construction of a memorial park dedicated to the children lost in the accident. The complex was completed in 2004.



1989 Bus Accident Memorial at Josefa Garcia Park, Alton, Texas

In 1990, the population in Alton grew slightly to 3,069. With new Mayor Salvador Vela and five Aldermen, a new vision for the town was forming. Improvements for existing colonias in Alton were in the works with the county for street paving and the installation of proper sewer lines. A portable building was built as a Community Center across the City Hall. The Volunteer Fire Department slowly grew as it served Alton and nearby rural areas for the county.

A 4A and 4B Development Corporations were voted in on July 9, 1996 to facilitate all economic development functions for the City of Alton. The City of Alton Development Corporation (CADC) was created to promote, encourage and enhance the creation of jobs and expansion of the local tax base through projects which assist in the retention and expansion of existing primary employers. The CADC created and obtained funding from several sources to promote good business practices throughout the city.



Within a decade, Alton grew an astounding 42%. According to the 2000 Census, Alton had 4,384 residents. Land was acquired by the city and had the opportunity to build a Community Center with a grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Urban County Program of the Hidalgo County. With the city fathers' vision of the value of helping the community, the Alton Recreation Center was also built in partnership with Texas A&M University CHUD Colonias Program in 2001. Nonprofit organizations are able to offer services in these facilities, thus impacting the community by allowing them access to recreation, health and quality of life from such local partners. Both facilities are presently active and continue to offer diverse types of programs for the residents of Alton.



A Home Rule Charter was voted for in the May election of 2006 and the City of Alton now has a Mayor and a four member board of Commissioners. The Greater Alton Chamber of Commerce is also established within this year, with its goal of creating a positive business environment within the community. The GACC is a nonprofit organization committed to supporting the networking among chamber members, catalyzing business development and promoting the City of Alton. In 2007, a new City Hall was constructed; it houses the Municipal Court, Police Department and Administrative offices. A Public Works facility was added in 2010 to provide further services for the City of Alton residents.



Alton City Hall

509 S. Alton Blvd., Alton, Texas

CITY ON THE GROW

Today, the City of Alton is comprised of five departments that provide multiple services to residents. The City places a high priority on public safety and maintains a force of 18 sworn Police Officers and 17 sworn Firefighters. Alton completed a new 9,000 square foot fire station with a Fire Academy training facility. Residents enjoy an array of recreation opportunities with four parks covering more than 61 acres, as well as a recreation center and a senior center. Services are further enhanced with the City Hall serving as an official US Passport Acceptance Facility.



While the City of Alton provides traditional municipal services, it also operates its own solid waste collection. The Alton Public Work Solid Waste Department offers both residential and commercial solid waste collection and has a 24 hour drive up recycling facility. A public sanitary sewer system is also owned by the City of Alton.

